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WOODBURN, JAMES ALBERT. *The Life of Thaddeus Stevens*. Pp. 620. Price, \$2.50. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1913.

The chief aims of this well written and extremely entertaining biography are the vindication of the character of Thaddeus Stevens and the defence of the position he took on the vital political issues with the history of which he was so intimately connected.

Few could read this story of Stevens' life and study his relation to the absorbing problems of his day—the anti-Masonic turmoil, the free-school question, the slavery controversy, the conduct of the Civil War, and the policy of reconstruction—without being convinced that whatever Stevens said or did, his public actions, always straightforward and consistent, were based upon sincere motives. In so far as the justification of his record depends upon the question of his personal convictions as to the correctness of his attitude no one will be inclined to deny that his purposes were honest and his intentions good; and one even forgets the vindictive spirit which often actuated the grim old fighter in admiration for the relentless vigor and uncompromising determination with which he battled for what he thought was a just cause.

However, Professor Woodburn creates the impression that the position taken by Stevens in his political combats was justified not only because Stevens believed he was right, but also because the policies which he advocated were for the most part sound and wholesome. This latter claim may well be subjected to criticism. Probably the most prominent feature of Stevens' political career and certainly the one for which he will be longest remembered was the share he had in the formulation of the reconstruction policy of 1867. This policy, born as it was of a desire for retaliation and vengeance and saturated with a spirit of hatred and embittered partisanship, is now generally recognized to have been a grave blunder, and no testimony as to the self righteousness of its authors is likely to cause a reversal or modification of that judgment.

Professor Woodburn's apology for the greenback movement will find little acceptance. His statement that there was a contraction of the circulating currency from \$58 per capita in 1865 to \$17 per capita in 1875 is somewhat overdrawn. The short-time interest-bearing notes, which he includes as a part of the volume of currency in 1865, had little circulation, and furthermore they were practically all retired by 1868 without causing much change in monetary conditions. Rapid resumption was of course attended by hardship to many debtors, and it is certain that by the thimble-rigging tactics of the gold speculator the government was defrauded and the people despoiled. Yet it is impossible to see how commercial stability could have been established had not financial adjustment been effected along the lines pursued.

T. W. VAN METRE.

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